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Wednesday, 17 February 2010 06:25

It is time for Americans to understand a key political distinction between "progressives" as they relate to both Democrats and Republicans. Progressives are individuals from both parties who commonly believe in social improvement through government action. Traditionally, progressives are thought to be liberal or Democrat in nature. This is not accurate. The first progressives were actually a splinter group from the Republican Party in 1912. Today, it can be argued that most of our legislators are progressive Democrats and progressive Republicans, evidenced by the exhaustive amount of legislation from both sides of the aisle that perpetuates government's ever-growing involvement in American lives.

The notion that a progressive agenda is strictly that of liberals, Democrats, or socialists is a misconception in desperate need of correction. The past century has shown us that any salient differences between the two parties have only narrowed with each new administration and/or legislature.

Most elected officials don't want us to make this distinction because it is very revealing. The goal of both parties' leadership is to constantly remind voters of perceived differences between the two ideologies to keep the fight alive and resources flowing in. Most voters tolerate the illusion for lack of a better solution. But tolerance is no longer an option if America is to survive, let alone thrive.

Progressives, both Democrat and Republican, are interested in control. Progressives in this country are not only our legislators, but also our largest corporate executives and shareholders, as well as the leadership of the largest government-sector unions and richly endowed foundations.

Progressives cross party lines, and enjoy a cabal of public, private, not-for-profit, and union-under-the-guise-of-labor influence that, because of sheer size in the marketplace and political arena, is now moving into position to control most American futures.

We would be wise to think of the U.S. Department of Energy as one of the arms of Exxon, BP, and the major utilities nationwide, including the largest natural-gas producers. During the Bush Administration, Ken Lay, CEO of Enron, was a weekly visitor to the White House and advised extensively on energy policy, much the same way that Andy Sterns, president of Service Employees International Union (SEIU), advises the Obama Administration on matters of human

services (welfare) and union negotiations that endow SEIU even more than it does its federal workers.

Similarly, the U.S. Treasury is heavily manned by ex-Goldman Sachs employees while simultaneously occupying positions within the Federal Reserve Bank, which is privately owned by a consortium of central banks around the world; the Federal Communications Commission would be a department of General Electric, Disney, Turner Broadcasting, and Microsoft, to name a few; the U.S. Department of Agriculture would be a subsidiary of Monsanto; the Food & Drug Administration can be seen as the quality-control faction of the big pharmaceuticals, including Pharma, which alone gave $199 million to campaigns from January through September 2009; and each state insurance commission can be viewed as a department of United Healthcare, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Humana, AARP, and the few other large health-insurance providers nationwide.

Finally, the U.S. Department of Education is arguably an extension of the major foundations that endow our universities, colleges, and elementary-through-high-school systems through exhaustive advisory on curriculum, textbook content, testing/evaluation/outcomes, etc.

Make no mistake: Most legislation considered and/or passed in the past two decades clearly benefits the major players of each industry, whether profit or not-for-profit, over any competitors and over all taxpayers.

It is imperative for voters to make this connection and cease the thinking that government is somehow more benevolent than mega-corporations. Government acts as an extension of the oligopolies that operate with impunity in this nation and are considered too big to fail, whether a financial or manufacturing enterprise. Ultimately, faith that Americans will continue to pay taxes to fund whatever legislation is unleashed ironically provides the tacit approval legislators use to justify spending without accountability.

Voters only need reflect on the past two decades of progressive policy in most of our larger metropolitan areas. Consider the government programming arising from the Department of Education, or that of Housing & Urban Development, and bear witness to the consistently dismal results across the country. For years every large U.S. metropolis has implemented every kind of progressive policy in an effort to manage its low-income populations, yet such programming has proven to be an utter failure by every conceivable measurement.

Because progressive policies are always top-down, beginning at either the federal level or the state, then trickling down to the counties and cities, they are bloated at the top but anemic at the bottom where it counts; are ill-managed from conception; are nearly always corrupt, and impose no enforceable incentive to contain costs.

It is also important to note that for every government function, the fox is watching the hen house. There is no accountability, other than to government unions where government employees are concerned. But the unions are no better; in fact they are often worse.

Last December *USA Today* reported that the average federal worker's pay has soared to $71,206 compared to $40,331 for the same jobs in the private sector (USAToday.com/news/washington/2009-12-10-federal-pay-salaries_N.htm). There is an absurd gap in the compensation for government employees as compared with the same jobs in the private sector, including economically irrational benefits and retirement provisions that are contributing mightily to an ever-burgeoning lack of future funds to pay for such excesses.

Nor are legislators managing their own lawmaking. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of laws on the books that require timely reviews whose deadlines are consistently missed, or whose reviews are simply ignored, some for decades.